

POEM ON GEOGRAPHY

W. H. HARTON.

*Read before the Senior Third High Grade of the Kansas
Teachers' Association, February, 1891.*

TO WHICH IS ADDED

The Death of Brock

July 1897 to 1898

Po

Poem on Geography.

A Form on Geography

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A Poem on Geography.

I.

Ho, all ye followers of Pestalozzi !
That teach the young idea how to shoot,
Eliminating from his breast the drossy,
And launching him on wisdom's pleasant route,
Onward and upward, like a parachute :
List to my musings on Geography,
And, though erratic and diffuse to boot,
Some humor in my fancyings you may see,
With here and there a molecule of sense set free.

II.

" Geography's a description of the earth,
Mathematical, Physical, and Political ;"
Teach this your class, or they'll display a dearth
Of school-book lore and knowledge analytical,
Courting the satire of the hypercritical.
But maugre that political you teach them,
Shun politics both Torical and Grittical ;
In school you mustn't practise them or preach them—
They're very nasty, like old ashes when you leach them.

III.

You first review the work that they've gone over
 And are supposed to know, but seldom do ;
 Take them about the world like a sea rover,
 But unimportant lands stop not to view,
 Like sterile wastes which zephyrs never woo.
 Tell them a lot of stuff about Japan—
 Your pains and patience you shall never rue;—
 Talk of the Chinese wall and Hindostan,
 And legends of Confucius and Zenghis Khan.

IV.

Teach the great cities of United States ;
 From wicked, metropolitan New York,
 To San Francisco at the Golden Gates ;
 From world-renowned Chicago, with its pork,
 And Boston famed for literary work,
 To New Orleans with cotton bales beset ;
 From smoky Pittsburg on Ohio's fork,
 To iron Escanaba and Marquette ;
 While neighboring Troy and Rochester you won't
 forget.

V.

Then there's the great city of Oswego,
 That brews from brightest barley vilest beer ;
 You'll find this out, if e'er you on a spree go,
 Their five cent lager is by far to dear—
 Twill make you sigh to quit this mundane sphere :
 They buy our barley to produce this swill,
 Taking some million bushels every year,
 Aud kick like vengeance 'gainst McKinley Bill—
 It gives variety when they have drunk their fill.

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VI.

A fair proud Portland faces either ocean,
 Casting coy smiles on every curling wave,
 Or to the wrathful hurricane's commotion
 Frowning defiance like a veteran brave :
 There's Louisville about the Mammoth Cave,
 And farther down Memphis with "yellow jack,"
 There's Charleston with many a soldier's grave,
 There's Washington upon the Potomac,
 Where every senator quaffs off his glass of sack.

VII.

There's Philadelphia, city of great Pen n,
 An honest Yankee, now-a-days a rarity ;
 Port Huron blooms with many a gambling den,
 And Saginaw, more famed for fights than charity,
 Is never short of lumber-woods vulgarity ;
 Detroit's a thriving, enterprising city,
 Possessing this unique peculiarity,
 It has some journalists by far more witty
 Than any wag who ever sat on committee.

won't

VIII.

Cleveland sets off the south side of Lake Erie,
 On Ogdensburg the Thousand Islands smile,
 Wheat elevators o'er Duluth swamps dreary
 Loom, like grim giants, for full many a mile ;
 St. Paul and Minneapolis the while
 Hold skirmishes across the Father of Waters,
 St. Louis boasts a river like the Nile,
 And all these enterprising Western daughters
 Indulge in periodical Anarchistic slaughters.

IX.

And now for our own Canada in particular,
 Land of the Beaver and the Maple tree,
 The tree so broad-leaved, fair, and perpendicular,
 Proclaiming sovereignty o'er hill and lea ;
 Emblem of beauty, strength, and liberty ;
 Fit emblem for this broad, majestic land,
 Whose shores beat back the waves of oceans three,
 That fiercely lash against each time-worn strand,
 Whose fields into illimitable plains expand.

X.

There are seven Provinces, and Districts five,
 And Territories North-West and North-East ;
 Where'er you go you see the people thrive
 And multiply themselves like germs of yeast.
 Columbia teems with many a fierce wild beast,
 Salmon they cook and can ere scarcely dead,
 And of the glistening gold, enough at least
 Can there be found to dissipate all dread,
 Strewn in the sands of many an ancient river-bed.

XI.

From Manitoba, No. 1 hard wheat
 Comes here to feed us, o'er the rails Pacific ;
 The modern slaughters will soon deplete
 Her rangy buffaloes, once so prolific ;
 The gopher goes by means more scientific,
 Strychnine to eat, and steel-trap for his leg
 (The former by its virtues soporific,
 The last delusive as a serpent's egg),
 Soon send his hide, half-tanned, to bleach in Winnipeg.

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XII.

Ontario's multiciplity of gifts
 Lacks only coal to render it complete ;
 The apple-tree its burdened branches lifts,
 The fleecy flocks on every hill-side bleat,
 The drooping vine suspends its clusters sweet,
 The autumn fields are full of golden grain,
 The manufactory with life replete
 Puts out machinery in endless train,
 Her Universities produce prodigious brain.

XIII.

Quebec, with institutions antiquated,
 Queer mixture of the past and present, shows,
 At once both unreclaimably belated
 And in full step with civil progress goes ;
 The Jesuit pulls her backward by the clothes ;
 The line is hard to draw 'twixt Church and State ;
 The former wealthy and pretentions grows,
 The latter learns for her to work and wait ;
 Thus, liberty disguised, the habitant how great !

XIV.

New Brunswick gives us ocean carriers stout.
 Plaster of Paris, iron, coal, and gold,
 With codfish, mackerel, and salmon trout,
 All these does Novia Scotia's wealth unfold.
 The Island Province, we are often told,
 A population pastoral doth support,
 Happy enough except when Winter cold
 About the strait pays his unwelcome court,
 Obstructing navigation with his wanton sport.

XV

There are a few fair cities I must mention :
 Vancouver, the young giant of the West,
 Whose rapid strides cannot escape attention ;
 With equitable temperature 'tis blest :
 Young Battleford sits brooding in her nest
 By the impetuous Saskatchewan ;
 'Twas there Riel, with military crest,
 Urged his poor half-breed dupes to set upon
 The volunteers ; but when they did, Riel was gone.

XVI.

There's Winnipeg, great city of the boom ;
 There's Sudbury, with stacks of nickle ore ;
 Toronto sweeps them all, as with a broom,
 In politics, in wealth, in love, in lore ;
 The catfish of Ashbridge's Bay galore
 Surpass all fish that ever swam the ocean—
 No oysters ever brought from Baltimore,
 Oily sardines, or eels of slippery motion,
 Shall ever change our minds of this well-founded
 notion.

XVII.

There's Ottawa, the country's capital,
 Beside the fierce, foam-tossing Chaudiere :
 The city in Toronto's scale is small,
 But from the river shows superb and fair ;
 The governmental towers pierce the air,
 Darkening the waters of the tide below ;
 The Governor resides at Rideau Square,
 Whither so many obsequious courtiers go—
 Their country and their conscience call them, don't
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XVIII.

You next may take a trip to Montreal,
Where the Victoria Bridge spans the St. Lawrence ;
You can't find anything that one may call
Its equal in Vienna, Rome, or Florence ;
It scorns the spite of tempests and of torrents :
The mighty University McGill,
With corner-stone based on Imperial warrants,
Contrasts more peaceful with the neighboring hill
Than Hochelaga's tepees in the days of Good King Bill.

XIX.

'Tis said Jacques Cartier scrambled up this mountain
To see what he could see the country round,
And was enraptured at the swelling fountain
That rolled beneath his feet with murmuring sound,
With yellow maize encircling every mound,
With burdened vines clinging to every bough,
While far away the heights meandering wound.
With many a bold, autumnal-tinted brow ;
And as such as it was then is fair Mount Royal now.

XX

But we must hurry on and reach Quebec,
Around which hangs a halo of romance :
The pilgrim wandering may little reck
He treads upon the noblest dust of France,
And views a scene that should the soul entrance—
'Twas here heroic Wolfe victorious died,
Here haughty Frontenac's defiant lance
Sent Phipps's fleet disabled down the tide,
Here Champlain reared the *fleur de lis* to wave in pride.

XXI.

The beetling rock still frowns upon the river,
 And on its top still stands the citadel,
 Peering, like ghostly sentinel forever,
 For enemy to wreak his vengeance fell,
 Without which naught can dissipate his spell :
 You still may hear the Montmorenci's roar,
 And up the narrows see the flood-tide swell ;
 St Charles's strand, the rocky Beauport shore,
 Point Levis, and Orleans recall great scenes of yore.

XXII.

Moncton, St John, Yarmouth, Annapolis
 Are nestled all around the Bay of Fundy.
 The wild Atlantic waves, spray-laden, hiss
 Round Halifax from Tuesday morn till Monday,
 Knowing no peaceful Sabbath day on Sunday.
 Pictou peers out upon a spacious port,
 And Louisbourg is destined to be one day
 A mart where many a foreigner will court,
 And, wondering, view the ruins of the old French fort.

XXIII

The Rockies, Cascades, Selkirks, Notre Dame,
 In giant stature tower through the land,
 While in the gorges of each shattered frame
 The sun-reflecting glaciers far expand,
 Where man or beast may never dare to stand ;
 Here the bald-headed eagle holds his sway,
 And, far beyond the reach of human hand,
 Circles the keen cold air at bright noon-day,
 Or plucks the vitals of his agonizing prey.

XXIV.

Some water-ways and beautiful expanses
 You may discover in our native soil,
 Whose rare sublimity the soul entrances,
 Making us quite forget the hours of toil—
 The wild Niagara's incessant broil,
 Filling the air with foam-flakes in its frenzy ;
 The swift St Clair, cumbered with nature's spoil ;
 Majestic, mild, mosquito-famed McKenzie,
 With climate claimed to cure consumption, croup, or
 quinsy.

XXV.

Lake Winnipeg and the Saskatchewan,
 That double-fountained river of the plain,
 Send their superfluous waters farther on
 By Nelson's stream into the endless main :
 The bay where Hudson perished not in vain
 Tingles with them the Arctic icebergs vast ;
 The Eskimo, his hours to entertain,
 Fur-coated 'gainst the keen north-eastern blast,
 Into the restless wave his wary net may cast.

XXVI

And now I'm drawing closely to the end
 Of this attempt to manufacture rhyme,
 And to you all I must my thanks extend
 For bearing patient with me over time.
 By participating in the crime,
 Common now, of writing poetry,
 Have beguiled you with the Muse's chime,
 Even enamored for Geography,
 I rest myself content whate'er the sentence be.

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The Death of Brock.

I.

When War advanced his hideous head,
And pillage filled the land,
When Canada echoed a foeman's tread,
Brock led his chosen band.

II.

He led them up the Queenston Heights,
Where the enemy did lurk,
And for his country's cherished rights
Charged with the men of York.

III.

As up the hill they hotly pressed,
With bullets whirring round,
Our hero, wounded in the breast,
Fell faint upon the ground.

IV.

But still his weapon waving wide,
His faltering men he cheers,
And in his dying accents cried,
"Push on ! brave volunteers."

V.

The Heights they stormed, and on the foe
Avenge'd their leader well ;
Some hundreds in the tide below
The foaming waters swell.

VI.

Hundreds are slain upon the spot,
Fighting with sword in hand,
And hundreds more, retreating, caught
By the little Canadian band.

VII.

Across the line the invader fled,
By British bayonets chased ;
And left stores, captives, wounded, dead,
Behind him in his haste.

VIII.

A stately monument now towers
Upon the scene of strife,
And all around is decked with flowers
That mourn a noble life.

IX.

Wherever Canada's sons are found,
None dare his virtues mock ;
And they deem it "haunted, holy ground"
Where bled Sir Isaac Brock.

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